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TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK:
The Pattern of Russian Liberal Reforms and its Implications
for Russia and the United States

BY
Robert W. Hand
JUNE 1992

Thesis Advisor: Mikhail Tsyarkin

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The Pattern of Russian Liberal Reforms and its Implications for Russia and
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by

Robert W. Hand
Captain, United States Army
B.S., United States Military Academy, 1984

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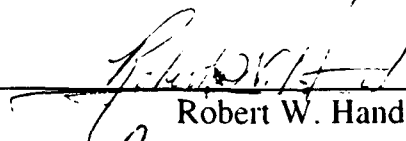
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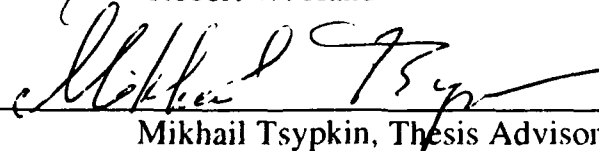
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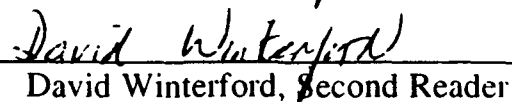
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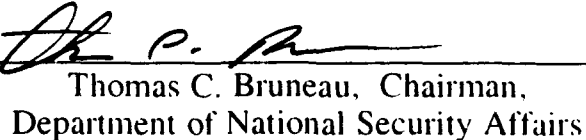
Author:


Robert W. Hand

Approved by:


Mikhail Tsypkin, Thesis Advisor


David Winterford, Second Reader


Thomas C. Bruneau, Chairman,
Department of National Security Affairs

ABSTRACT

The current political and social turmoil in the erstwhile Soviet Union challenges the U.S. to devise new methods for effectively dealing with Russia and the independent republics of the Commonwealth. Part of this challenge involves the evaluation of the most likely changes arising from the revolution, the most probable course of events, and their implications for U.S. foreign relations.

This thesis argues that the history of Russian liberal reforms has followed a definite pattern, and that an examination of the history of these reforms can provide U.S. foreign policymakers a tool with which to understand the dynamics of today's situation. Ultimately, this thesis argues that the U.S. must become thoroughly intertwined with Yeltsin's Russia and support the establishment of a liberal democratic society, or risk the backlash of conservative Russian elites.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	
A. The Dilemma.....	1
B. Using History Within a Culture.....	5
II. Critical Concepts.....	14
A. Russian Reforms.....	15
B. Russian Core Values.....	16
III. Russian Liberal Reforms: Action and Reaction.....	29
A. Alexander II.....	30
1. Reforms.....	32
2. Reaction.....	43
B. Nikita Khrushchev.....	52
1. Reforms.....	54
2. Reaction.....	63
IV. Transition to Today	
A. Gorbachev's Inheritance.....	67
B. <i>Perestroika</i>	68
C. Reaction.....	74
V. Conclusion.....	77
A. Competing Views.....	78
B. Implications for the Future.....	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	92
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST.....	98

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I. Introduction

A. The Dilemma

The current political and social turmoil in what was once the Soviet Union is challenging Western governments to devise new methods for effectively dealing with Yeltsin's Russia and the republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The intricate challenge before us is threefold: evaluating the most effective method to deal with the changes arising from the 1991 revolution; discerning the most likely course of events; and understanding the long-term implications for international relations, especially between Russia and the United States. Unfortunately, in the U.S. the last two requirements have been overshadowed by the immediacy of the former. That is to say, in this election year, the administration, economists, and even the public-at-large have repeatedly given short-term, personal diplomacy precedence over the goal of long-term global stability.

In December 1991, Robert Gates, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, admitted before Congress that little progress was made in discerning the revolution's most likely developments and their affect on the rest of the world. Gates claimed that, "we just do not know where this revolution will

lead."¹

We come, then, to our dilemma: If we accept Mr. Gates' statement, we must logically conclude that the U.S. will approach Russia cautiously during the next few months, if not years. The U.S. will have to wait and observe what develops in the CIS before it can act. Obviously, this is a precarious position: A nuclear-capable, potential adversary will undergo rapid social and political changes while the U.S. can only react, often while the next change is underway, hoping its tardy responses will have the desired effect.

Theoretically, the U.S. can avoid this reactive policy only by developing a flexible, coherent strategy which is proactive and increases our dealings with the former republics--especially Russia. Only then can we hope to influence the cultures involved and advance democratic principles. To do this, we should use all the tools available to understand our potential allies and then plan for their change. Only then can we meet our world leadership obligations head-on and with the confidence that our policies are appropriate for our goals.

But today's problem is more than just theoretical. How do we unravel the tangled ball of string that is the CIS and

¹Robert Gates, Congressional Testimony (Atlanta: Cable News Network, Dec. 10, 1991), live report from Washington, D.C., 10 Dec. 92.

discern the solution to such a complex and knotty problem as its social and political restructuring? We must begin by building a paradigm, or methodology, within which to work.

This paradigm should reflect the culture in which we will labor, the reality of today's situation, and the social perceptions of the people we hope to influence. Additionally, it must encompass as many disciplines and operational levels as possible to gain a thorough picture of the object of our concern.

To do this would take far more space than available in a Master's Thesis. Therefore we should lay out the foundation of our work in a logical sequence in such a way that it will be lucid and concise, yet universal in application and understanding.¹ Consequently, we will frame our paradigm with only three assumptions: (1) The study of Russia's history will provide clues to the culture and its view of the recent liberalizing reforms; (2) The disenfranchised people of Russia are the source of social unrest, but the ruling elite are the only ones who can actually change the character of the

¹The concept of using a broadly-based paradigm to explain man's actions within a society are drawn from the suggestion for a "New Paradigm." See: Robert C. North, War, Peace, Survival: Global Politics and Conceptual Synthesis (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 133.

²Sigfried Kracauer, History: Last Things Before Last, completed by Paul Kristkeller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 18.

country's government; and, (3) Russia, herself, will continue to dominate the majority of U.S. foreign policy decisions in the European theater.⁴

Armed with our assumptions and a guide with which to build a paradigm it is now possible to chart the waters we will navigate in this examination of Russia's reactions to liberal reforms and the their end result. First, this thesis will define the two types of reform Russia has experienced and the concept of Russian Core Values. Next, we will identify prior Russian regimes whose ideology and legislation qualify as liberalizing reform, examine the core values evident in the Russian reaction to them, and make a brief analogy to today's Russia. Ultimately, this thesis will seek to prove: The core values of security, stability, and predictability have always worked in opposition to liberal reforms, causing them to eventually fail; that today's social and political liberalization of Russia is also likely to fail if left to its own (i.e., without massive external exchange and assistance from liberal democracies); and, that an in-depth knowledge of these core values and their effect on the Russian political system is necessary to discern the appropriate U.S. response to promote democracy in Russia.

⁴Any work of this scale is only as good as its evaluation of the problem it frames. As a result, the author makes only the fewest and most basic assumptions necessary to examine the problem, and eliminate the possibility of "assuming the problem away."

B. Using History Within a Culture

History is not unitary, but pluralistic. Every region and area has its own history, and the investigation of causation becomes possible when it is seen that the activities of men under different conditions may be compared.

To attempt to solve any problem confronting man as a whole is both a complex and arduous task. Regardless of the discipline within which an individual endeavors, he eventually confronts the disparity between his own norms, mores, and values, and that of the culture he studies. As a result, he must acknowledge his own limitations not only of understanding, but also of interpretation, evaluation, and application. This is particularly true when attempting to discern the eventual pattern and resulting policy implications of Russia's liberalizing reforms. Therefore, it is imperative that we closely examine Russia's history, the cultural values evident as a result of liberal reforms, and their influence to divine the most likely outcome of today's social turmoil.

Any attempt to use history to discern a pattern or theoretical argument, however, immediately confronts the theories behind the study of history. To propose that history is completely cyclical in nature is to ignore the uniqueness of man. At the same time, to deny that man's actions set the

Frederick J. Teggart, as cited in Robert F. Berkhofer's A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan Canada, Ltd., 1969), 250.

foundation for the future ignores continuity, contingency, and man's impact on society. Perhaps the most accurate way of looking at history, then, is to use it in concert with other aspects of human behavior, and the sciences which govern their study. To justify this approach, we have only to acknowledge the continual call for scientists and social theorists to combine certain elements of their work in order to make some sense of man's actions.⁶ This is especially true in history, for

It is here that the historian has to go beyond his events in an act of intellectual recreation unnecessary or impossible in the natural or social sciences...although he cannot reject evidence which is undeniably accessible, it is open to him to interpolate from it in a manner which is not given to the sciences, which rely on experimentation to test their hypothesis.⁷

This approach accepts the fact that man as an individual is unique and varied; that he is ingenious and can go beyond logic to solve problems.⁸ It also allows a certain amount of repetition, or habit, to creep into the evaluation. The latter point is critical in any study of history, especially within a culture, since:

⁶Berkhofer, 4-5.

⁷Gordon Leff, History and Social Theory (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1969), 22.

⁸Berkhofer, 260-321.

The social universe with its near-stable customs and volatile opinions, its small groups and masses, would seem to fall under the rule of nature. In other words, it is possible, and legitimate, to break down the phenomena that make up the universe into its repeatable elements and analyze their interrelationships and interactions for regularities.⁹

These statements summarize our foundation for studying man, but what of the nature of man in a society? If we acknowledge that man is indeed unique and capable of independent thought,¹⁰ we must also consider that he is a creature of almost rigid habit and norms.¹¹ But from whence do those norms come? The culture and society in which an individual is reared establishes a certain amount of socialization which, in turn, affects a being throughout his entire life. Consequently, a man often makes decisions based not only on logic, as Kant, Weber, and Dilthey would have us believe, but on his emotion. "As a result, humans sometimes act without a clear relationship--without a cause and effect--and are left attempting to justify their actions in concrete and observable terms."¹²

We come to realize, then, that while history "represents the doings of multifarious individuals in diverse times and

⁹Kracauer, 25.

¹⁰Leff, 69.

¹¹Ibid., 5.

¹²Berkhofer, 43.

places,"¹³ it is also strongly influenced by the context in which the individual operates. Additionally, it implies that man's routine and reasoning is, by-and-large, predictable,¹⁴ and that we inherit attitudes, habits, values, categories, and skills from our society which often endure for centuries.¹⁵

This, then, requires us to structure our study along the lines of examining the culture and history of our subjects rather simply evaluating them in laboratory isolation or as a "mirror image" of our own society¹⁶; a critical position since we seek to evaluate a culture whose history and political lineage are an enigma to most Americans. Obviously, then, to study Russia during this time of severe civil unrest requires knowledge of both Russian history and culture.

At this point, a standard criticism of historians appears: The attempt to compare the past with the present will always yield skewed results since there can be no direct parallels. The claim is that the problems of studying man in the past are substantial in scope, if not in number. Partial or absent dates and data and the difficulty of linking the concept of

¹³Leff, 4.

¹⁴Kracauer, 21.

¹⁵Leff, 5-6.

¹⁶Dilthey differed from Kant in that the origin of mankind's knowledge was not *a priori*, but a product of lived experience, i.e., the culture and society influenced an individual's perception and action. For further discussion, see: Leff, 29.

social change to a particular historical occurrence are legitimate concerns, let alone drawing conclusions for today's events, are the foundations of this criticism.¹⁷ Admittedly, an individual, even within the same society, is fundamentally different from his ancestors, and the situations he faces are just as diverse.

But, while the criticism appears valid, there is substantial proof to the contrary. Some of the evidence proving that an individual is similar in concerns and actions to his ancestors was cited earlier. Additionally, we should counter by acknowledging that, "even if no one else is around, the definition of a situation and the action in it will be influenced by social factors as well as individual judgment,"¹⁸ and,

While it is true that all historical 'laws' crumble upon closer inspection, it is equally true that all of them comprise a hard core of substantive observations and experiences, some growing out of an intimate contact with historical reality.¹⁹

Finally, it is true that the study of man is not scientific. The lack of results from scientific studies does not, however, make it impossible to understand the

¹⁷Berkhofer, 10-12.

¹⁸Ibid., 38.

¹⁹Kracauer, 41.

consistencies from generation to generation--only difficult.²⁰ Therefore, experience in this practice does imply that, while exact parallels usually cannot be drawn, there is a vast body of social theory which points to a surprising amount of similarity between generations. That is to say, to use history in addition to current social theory often allows us to look beyond the distracting details, many of which have nothing to do with the issue, and discern the common interests and threads of a society, eventually defining a path specific to the culture which is studied.²¹

Therefore, to speak of historical parallels within a culture is a valid expression of a useful attempt to understand the past, present, and future of a society as a whole. After all, "histories such as that of the Earth and the cosmos are narratives just like that of man. While their laws are those of the natural scientist, the laws of human history are nearly as binding."²² The answer to the criticism is simple: "When the historian studies change and continuity, the repetitive and general must enter his study so that he knows where to look and understands what he finds."²³

²⁰Berkhofer, 7.

²¹Ibid., 253.

²²Kracauer, 33.

²³Berkhofer, 248.

From our conclusion, we understand the necessity of studying an individual within his culture, and that his actions are a product of immutable principles of behavior defined by that culture. This leads us generally down the same path as behaviorists of the 1950s. Unfortunately, they chose to focus on the predictability of man as proven by statistical data, which severely limits both the application and appeal of their theories. As a result, their path contradicted the independent nature of man discussed earlier, and they were largely discredited since man's uniqueness often disproved their predictions. But, while our way lies in the same general direction, the path we will take is a much more accommodating one,⁴ which will account for the need for diversity cited earlier.

This does not negate the attempts of those 1950s behaviorists. Their logic has helped establish the path we travel. But, "historical behavioralism refers not just to the statistical techniques, but to new methods and theories dealing with man's behavior."⁵

What guidelines, or laws, should we use then to define this apparently anarchical view of man and his history? While it is true that the laws of behavioralism require loser

⁴Ibid., 6.

⁵Ibid., 5.

definition, they still rely, correctly so, on the elements of mankind--which are studied in the human sciences of psychology, sociology, and anthropology, to name a few.²⁶ Perhaps the best discussion of using behavioralism in a manner consistent with our examination can be found in Robert Berkhofer's A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis, in which he states there are a few general rules we must follow²⁷:

1. The orientation of analysis needs to take account of the interpersonal as well as intrapersonal.
2. The orientation must be a dynamic interpretation.
3. It must allow for free will and rationality as well as emotional, irrational thought.
4. It must permit complexity.
5. It must be broad-based and tolerant, but still give limits.
6. It must reflect current thought and yet remind us of "the social determinants of behavioral knowledge."

These are the guidelines under which this thesis will operate.

In conclusion, the end of our rather arduous, yet essential, journey into historical theory yields a viable foundation for our examination of the social and political reaction to liberal reforms in Russia. Consequently, we have

²⁶Kracauer, 19-20.

²⁷Berkhofer, 31-32.

identified some propositions fundamental to any examination of our subject. First, we acknowledge that man is unique, and is therefore capable of acting without regard to external influences. Second, we established that man is also affected by his society and culture. As a result, he will think and reason along lines that are generally predictable if one considers his cultural and ancestral lineage. Third, we established that it is legitimate to examine the effects of today's social unrest in terms of similar situations from yesterday. Lastly,

the situational interpretation of human behavior is dynamic; it sees the interpreting of situations as an on-going process, for the actor is constantly evaluating how things were, how they are, and how they may be. Thus, the evaluation of the elements in a situation involves the cumulative as well as the immediate experience of an individual in a society. Each individual, therefore, will have an image of his society's history as part of that cumulative experience.²⁸

Therefore, a behavioral approach along the lines of our study **can**, at least in theory, yield a discernable pattern of reform and reaction in the Russian context.

²⁸Berkhofer, 38.

II. Critical Concepts

In any work dealing with abstract concepts and ideals, and particularly in politics, it is necessary to thoroughly define the critical concepts observed and evaluated as well as the context in which they operate. Therefore, this thesis must take this necessary step and define its most salient concepts and the Russian context in which they operate. Without these definitions the subsequent examination of Russian history and politics would mean little since the diagnosis and prognosis could possibly be misinterpreted. Since this is not the intended result, nor would it allow this thesis to do what it purports, this section will define those concepts and assumptions key to the thesis argument.

The first sub-section of this chapter will define the types of reforms experienced by Russia throughout her history. They will rely on the most accepted interpretations of Russian history and proven definitions that can be found in most political science texts. Therefore, this section will simply state the definitions of modernizing and liberalizing Russian reform and avoid any analysis of the accuracy or value of the definitions themselves. The last, and rather substantial,

sub-section will develop and identify, through an examination of Russian society as chronicled by both historians and foreign travellers alike, specific core values which play a crucial part in the Russian culture and its acceptance of liberal reforms such as we have recently seen.

A. Russian Reforms

To proceed with our thesis, we must also look at the types of reforms that have been part of Russian history. After a careful evaluation of various rulers and their plans, there are only two major categories. They are:

1. Modernizing Reforms - Reform plans and legislation which have as their goal the modernization of the country. This modernization may take the shape of an influx of technology, capital of modern design, updated labor management practices, or even an update of academic theories and instruction. In Russia, both Peter the Great and Catherine the Great attempted to modernize the country while maintaining their autocratic hold on power. This last point is significant since it delineates the difference between a modernizing reform, and a liberalizing reform.

2. Liberalizing Reforms - Progressive change in the political and/or structural nature of a country in which the authority

divests and decentralizes its power, usually through a voting process, to the constituency. The change comes about as a result not of revolution (as in the French or American Revolutions), but as a result of a gradual opening of the political process, which occurs within legislative purviews. While there are various degrees of liberals, who support change in government toward the divestiture, they all focus on the nature of an individual's rights as the key to legal rule.²⁴

These two types of Russian reform are critical to our examination. They will provide us with a common terminology as we seek to understand the Russian ethos in times of liberal reform.

B. Russian Core Values

This unnatural composite of the minutiae of Byzantium and the ferocity of the horde, this struggle between the etiquette of the Byzantine Empire and the uncivilized virtues of Asia has produced the prodigious State that Europe sees rising today and whose influence she will perhaps feel tomorrow **without the power to understand its source...**[emphasis added].³⁰

²⁴Leon P. Baradat, Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impacts, Third Edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, a Div. of Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1988), 19.

³⁰Astolphe L.L. Marquis de Custine, Custine's Eternal Russia: A New Edition of Journey for Our Time, ed. and trans. Phyllis Penn Kohler (Miami: Center for Advanced International Studies, 1976), 30.

When we evaluate Russia in the light of our historical theory and definitions (see Appendix: Methodology--Using History Within a Culture) we find that there are, indeed, certain cultural themes which have repeatedly guided Russia through the tempest of liberal reforms. These themes, then, yield specific core values which can be identified, examined, and credited with their influence on society. They are the thread which has been woven into the Russian cultural tapestry for hundreds of years. Consequently, a thorough understanding of these values and their influence will assist us in discerning the most likely course of today's events in Russia.

There is, however, one more piece of foundation to lay. We must embark on an analysis of the society in which we will operate and define it within its own cultural boundaries. It is imperative at this time that we draw these boundaries because there is a tremendous difference between the culture of the West and that of Russia, and since to fail to do so would make us guilty of the sin of mirror-imaging mentioned in the introduction.

Ever since a lone twelfth century teutonic knight wandered into a bizarre kingdom east of then-known Christendom, Russia has been an enigma to the West. General descriptions of the Muscovite State since the sixteenth century included and repeated three main features:

1. The State government was always of a military structure.
2. There was a supreme, centralized, authoritarian structure based on service, not rights and privileges.
3. The head of the government possessed all-encompassing authority and supreme jurisdiction.³¹

Various reports also include a backward nation consisting of oppressed and disenfranchised millions, in which the people have reacted violently to change. Such were the intimate details provided by a certain Prince K. to the Marquis de Custine:

I am going to give you a key that will serve to explain everything in the country you are entering. Think at each step you take in this land of Asiatic people that the influence of Chivalry and Catholicism has been missed by the Russians; not only have they not received it, they have acted violently against it with animosity during the long wars with Lithuania.³²

These observations, however, were not just the impressions of the occasional foreigner who stumbled into Russia; but they were the impressions of hundreds of visitors, casual, official, and diplomatic alike, who had experienced Russia--lived within its borders. Two of the most noted observers of the Russian nation were French: Custine (mentioned above) and Gide.

³¹Tibor Szamuely, The Russian Tradition, ed. Robert Conquest (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 74.

³²Custine, 25.

Custine travelled throughout Russia for five months in the spring and summer of 1839. Under the protection of Tsar Nicholas I, he carefully observed the people, the culture, and the government. His writings, while tainted by a western perspective, reveal his sincere impressions of the Russians over 150 years ago. He wrote that they were pious, accustomed to hard living, supremely adroit, and enamored of order, discipline, and service. Custine even implied that the architecture of the Russian capitol, St. Petersburg, smacks of a desire for predictability and regularity (due largely, no doubt, to Peter I's influence).

Society's entire structure seemed to revolve around service to the tsar--a servitude oppressive in nature and accepted by the people as the way it should be.³³ And here, it should be noted that the most condemning evidence of despotism and servitude was given not by Custine, but by Tsar Nicholas I, himself, who said, "Despotism still exists in Russia, since it is the essence of my government; but it is in keeping with the character of the nation."³⁴

To further support Custine's characterization, the esteemed Russian Studies Professor, Tibor Szamuely, found similarly that Russian values are manifested in the State

³³Custine, 84-87, 162.

³⁴Ibid., 79.

structure:

Two of the factors that determined the Russians' attitude towards their state can be fairly easily pin-pointed. One was their acute consciousness of the fact that only a powerful and rigidly centralized State, in full control of the nation's every resource, could ensure national survival. Another was the largely artificial, centuries-old isolation from Europe, and the resulting ignorance and fear of the outside world: a feeling very similar to that which led early cartographers to decorate uncharted seas with the legend 'Here be monsters.'³⁵

As mentioned earlier, Custine also writes about the vast cultural distance separating Russia and its political system from the West. But just as he acknowledged this distance, he also admits that the Russian culture is not deficient...only different. As evidence of this, we have only to read the following passage:

If the military spirit which rules in Russia has produced nothing resembling our religion of honor, that does not mean that the nation has less strength because its soldiers are less illustrious than ours. Honor is a human divinity; but in practical life duty is worth as much as honor and even more than honor; it is less magnificent, but it is more sustained and stranger...The real strength of nations is obedience to the power which commands them, just as that of armies is discipline."

So, we see that the Marquis de Custine did for Russia what

"Szamuely, 60.

"Custine, 27.

De Tocqueville did for the fledgling America.³⁷ He travelled to an intriguing country, studied the land, its people, and its governing system, and provided the rest of the world with his impressions. This proves to be a promising beginning for those who wish to resolve the enigma that is Russia. It is also promising for those who wish to understand the culture and its reaction to liberal reforms. But Custine's observations were not unique. One hundred years later, a more eminent Frenchman observed the same culture and wrote of his experiences.

In 1936, even though a great social revolution had apparently changed the face of Russia in 1917, another Frenchman, Andre Gide, took the same journey as Custine. What he found was so similar to Custine's work, that his book could appear almost as its paraphrase.³⁸ So numerous were the parallels that it hardly seems necessary to cover the same ground again.³⁹

In sum, then, we find that, "the observations [of Custine and Gide] could easily be matched from any of the scores of

³⁷A fascinating comparison of De Tocqueville and Custine's observations was made in Irena Gross' The Scar of Revolution (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).

³⁸Szamuely, 4-5.

³⁹For Gide's impressions of the Soviet Union, see: Andre Gide, Return from the USSR, trans. Dorothy Bussy (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

descriptions of Russia published in the West over the past 400-odd years."⁴⁰ Apparently, Russia, even after the Bolshevik revolution (which claimed to change the entire nature and structure of society) remained the same. Admittedly, there were differences, but the people were still oppressed. They were still terrorized. And the titular head of government (Stalin) still qualified as an autocrat.

In both cases, it was obvious to the observers that the Russians were fundamentally different from westerners. Both Custine and Gide found a nation whose foundation was, in many ways, opposite to everything embodied in the liberal democracies of the West. It seems, then, that Custine was accurate in writing, "between France and Russia there is a Wall of China--the Slavic language and character. In spite of the pretensions inspired in the Russians by Peter the Great, Siberia begins at the Vistula."⁴¹

But, if the comments on the stability of the Russian society and culture over one hundred years are something short of remarkable, the body of evidence claiming the same for the individuals within this society is extraordinary. In fact, there is even substantial evidence that little has changed as late as the 1970s in certain parts of Russia. Take, for

⁴⁰Szamuely, 6.

⁴¹Custine, 68.

example, this statement written by Victor Herman:

Many, if not most villages remain much as they were a century ago, and some are primitive almost beyond belief...Many villages still lack electricity and almost have no running water.⁴²

But now we are no longer dealing with the society as a whole, but with the individual and his environment. This also takes us headlong into one of the greatest ongoing debates in Russian area studies: "the Russian Soul."

For ages, academicians have argued over the existence of the Russian Soul. And, if they agreed that it did exist, they argued over its effect on the Russian mentality. Ultimately, not only the academic community, but anyone who studied Russia, Western and Russian alike, came to accept the "fact" that Russians **were** different from most people. They wrote such statements such as:

Anyone familiar with peasants and their village life can easily see that all the paradoxical, contradictory and enigmatic characteristics of what has been called the "Russian Soul"--so mysterious to the Western world--are to be found in the villages, today, as they have been for centuries.⁴³

Statements like these ultimately supported the position that

⁴²Victor Herman and Fred E. Dohrs, Realities: Might and Paradox in Soviet Russia, Illus. Mary Ellen Dohrs (Southland, MI: Independent Publishers, Inc., 1982), 67.

⁴³Ibid., 67.

the individual was merely a microcosm of the enigma that was the state.⁴⁴ However, the existence of the Russian Soul is no longer the issue. The key point which must be understood is that the **perception** it exists has forever changed, and will continue to influence, both Russians and foreigners alike in their understanding of the people and their place in the Russian nation.⁴⁵ While we will not evaluate the issue of "the Russian Soul" any further, we will examine one more prominent trait which appears consistently throughout the society.

It has been said that the Russian is a historical being. He appreciates the fundamental forces of history which have produced the culture he knows today. Even Custine's trip made this apparent as he retold a discussion with the aforementioned Prince K: "History has its fatalities; everywhere the past extends its influence over the present. Woe to the Prince who does not wish to yield to it."⁴⁶ But the apparent obsession with history does not limit itself to conversation. In fact, Russian literature repeatedly uses the historical theme, to include reflections on the past and

⁴⁴This understanding was, undoubtedly, the cause of several misinterpretations or, at least, misunderstandings between the Western nations and Russia.

⁴⁵Herman, 61.

⁴⁶Custine, 112.

forecasts for the future, to convey its message. "It is interesting that both in literature and life the Russian really loves to preach and to foretell the future while at the same time using the past to deny the present. This remains true even today."⁴⁷ So, the historic nature of the individual Russian, combined with traits ascribed to the Russian Soul have molded these people and their culture into a strangely different society, the enigma in which few western ideals produce the desired effect, if any at all.

Now that we have examined the cultural and the individual foundations of Russia, it is necessary to consider the last major factor of socialization, the government. Much of what could be said here has already surfaced in earlier discussions. And, as mentioned before, the supreme governing factor seems to be order and a strong, centralized government. But the desire for security, stability, and predictability originates from a far deeper source than an individual's insecurities. Paul Miliukov had perhaps the best articulated understanding of these values.

Compelling national need, wrote the famous Russian historian, resulted in the creation of an omnipotent State on the most meagre [sic] material foundation; this very

⁴⁷Dmitrii Sergeyevich Likhachev, from a speech entitled "The National Nature of Russian History," given under the auspices of the W. Averall Harriman Lecture Series (New York: Columbia University, 13 Nov. 1990), 16.

meagerness constrained it to exert all the energies of its population--and in order to have full control over these energies it had become omnipotent.⁴⁸

This omnipotence of the State provided the security and stability which, as we have seen, the people treasure. In Russia's autocratic tradition, their desires were fulfilled. To those who would criticize the strength or longevity of the drive for stability, security, and predictability, it is best to recall an account from Russia's dark past, when Ivan IV (The Terrible) ruled with a seemingly unquenchable thirst for power, torture, and blood.

Even in the face of Ivan IV's hideous reign of terror, when he feigned abdication the people, in spite of his cruelty, united with one voice to plead for him to stay. 'Anarchy was feared.'⁴⁹

As a result of this drive for autocracy, and the core values of stability and predictability, the Russian state developed, long ago, a character which required "insulators" from external threats. Consequently, establishing buffer states became a major facet of Russia's foreign policy. This solved a dilemma brought on by another of Russia's core values--security. Unfortunately, the end result of such a

⁴⁸Paul Miliukov, Ocherki Po Istorii Russkoi Koltury, Vol. II, 3rd edition, St. Petersburg, 1909, 22-23, as cited in Szamuely, 28.

⁴⁹Custine, 168-169.

desire can only be defined as imperialist, and that trait, combined with the role the Orthodox church played in propagating the idea of the "Russian Destiny," has always been a major threat to the people of Europe. Again, Custine provides the most perfect summary:

We deceive ourselves on the role that Russia wants to play in Europe: according to its constitutive principle, it would represent order; but according to the character of its men, it would propagate tyranny under the pretext of correcting anarchy--as if despotism corrected any evil!⁵⁰

As we conclude our examination of the Russian culture, we see that there are, in fact, certain aspects which stubbornly transcend time and social revolution. And that these characteristics may, in fact, be part of another enigma: the Russian Soul. But the debate over its existence diverts us from our purpose. We need simply to focus on the fact that there is one common thread

[among] all the descriptions of Russia, past and present: the astonishing durability of certain key social and political institutions, traditions, habits, and attitudes; their staying power, their essential stability amidst the turbulent currents of violent change, chaotic upheaval, and sudden innovation.⁵¹

So, the core values of security, stability, and predictability have always played a key role in the

⁵⁰Ibid., 28.

⁵¹Szamuely, 6.

development of the Russian and, later, Soviet state. Indeed, it does seem that, "it is hard to change the mentality of a people; it is not a matter of a day or even a reign."⁵²

⁵²Custine, 110.

III. Russian Liberal Reforms: Action and Reaction

It is true that nothing is abolished in Russia without danger; peoples who lack any guarantee lean only on their customs. Stubborn attachment to customs, protected by riot and poison, is one of the pillars of the social order, and the periodic assassination of rulers proves to the Russians that this **order can command respect**.⁵³
[emphasis added]

From the intricate necessities of developing our thesis, definitions, and the context of our work, we turn now to the meat of our argument, namely that: Liberal reforms in Russia's history have always failed because of the elites' drive for security, stability, and predictability. To test our thesis, we must therefore examine the only two examples of liberalizing reform apparent in Russian history--the reign of Alexander II and certain aspects of Nikita Khrushchev's reform programs. By examining both the reforms and the reaction to them, it may be possible to discern the general patterns associated with liberalizing reforms, and their consequences. We will, therefore, proceed by examining these two rulers, the preconditions for their reforms, the reform plans themselves, and the reaction of the political elite (which invariably annulled much of the progress made during reform).

⁵³Ibid., 90.

A. Alexander II

Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich, the future Alexander II, was born on April 17, 1818 in Moscow four days before Easter. The happy occasion was augmented by a multitude of special circumstances. The fact that Easter was approaching, that it was a healthy birth in Moscow, and that there was now a male heir to the throne all played a part in heightening the joy of the masses. Fireworks filled the skies upon the announcement of the birth of the heir.⁵⁴

While still an adolescent, Grand Duke Alexander travelled through Russia on a seven-month tour of thirty provinces. He visited places in which no Russian ruler had ever set foot. And he saw peasant life in person.

During the conduct of his education, Alexander showed the Romanov propensity for the military, which concerned his educator, Basil Zhukovskii, since. "[he] foresaw that Alexander would rule in a world very different from the one into which he had been born." The European Industrial Revolution would require leaders who understood trade, economics, technology, railroads, and political considerations. Therefore, when Alexander ascended to the throne, he had completed perhaps the most comprehensive

⁵⁴W. Bruce Lincoln, The Romanovs: Autocrats of all the Russias (New York: The Dial Press, 1981), 427-428.

training program of any tsar; a program dedicated to dealing with the complexities of modernizing Russia. This education, combined with his extensive service of fifteen years at the higher levels of government made for one of the smoothest transitions of any new ruler.⁵⁶

He began to govern Russia according to his father's principles. There was a slightly softer tone to his regime, but both father and son believed in the integrity of autocratic power, both idealized military principles, and both directed all their attention to serving Russian's welfare as they understood it.⁵⁶

But, there were some significant challenges to be overcome, and quickly, before Russia lost her standing in the realm of international politics. One of these challenges was the aftermath of the Crimean War.⁵⁷ In essence, the confrontation of 1854-55 was worldwide, and saw Russia defeated in many aspects, by a coalition of France, Great Britain, Sardinia-Piedmont, and the Ottoman Turks.⁵⁸ During Alexander II's first year as tsar...

⁵⁶Lincoln, 434.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Although the Russian defeat in the Crimea was not a direct threat to Russian sovereignty, it did forebode a drastic shift away from Russian influence in Europe and the resulting security. For further discussion see: Richard Pipes, Russia Under the Old Regime (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 163-164.

⁵⁸The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Volume 3, Micropedia (Ready Reference), 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopedia, Britannica, Inc., 1987) 737.

Russia's military effort collapsed as the war turned a disastrous fiasco in its Crimean theatre...Alexander conceded defeat, and a peace conference assembled at Paris to end the conflict...Russia had been defeated in her first great confrontation with Europe in four decades. It was, without doubt, the end of an era.⁵⁹

But this debacle left Alexander to deal with the dismal consequences of his father's policies.⁶⁰ Finally, to reestablish Russia in the realm of influential political actors, Alexander had to make drastic changes. The tsar was faced with the great recurring dilemma of Russian power: Namely...

if Alexander hoped to preserve the glory his predecessors had won for Russia, he must seek greatness in the less exalted arena of domestic affairs. Russia must modernize if she were still to compete with Europe's Great Powers.⁶¹

1. Reforms

Faced with an undesirable, and perhaps untenable situation, Alexander II still maintained the control and determination to initiate unpopular, but vital reforms. "Forced by the logic of the situation, the new monarch decided to undertake, and actually carried through, fundamental

⁵⁹Lincoln, 435.

⁶⁰For fascinating reading on the Crimean War and the roles played by the major actors, see: Norman Rich, Why the Crimean War?: A Cautionary Tale (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985).

⁶¹Ibid., 575.

reforms unparalleled in scope in Russian history since Peter the Great."⁶²

Dealing first with the failure of the Crimean War, Alexander examined the reasons behind the defeat. This single step was to reveal a plethora of problems which required the entire restructuring of Russian society. First, the Crimean defeat seemed to have had more causes than just an ineffective military. Major threats loomed ominously over the majority of Russia's social and political institutions. Some historical studies cite the tremendous decline in the number of serf laborers, inefficient production, and a "general loosening of the social fabric" as factors requiring liberal reforms. Otherwise, the economic pillar of Russia would collapse.⁶³

Other Russians were prepared to argue that **serfdom** not only prevented the modernization of the army but was also the reason for their nation's backwardness...Yet even these arguments did not at first convince Alexander that he must institute far-reaching social and economic reforms. As his father would have done, he assembled a select committee to discuss the reasons for the Crimean defeat. From that point, an extremely complex interplay of events and political forces set in motion a process that produced the Great Reforms.⁶⁴

The Great Reforms were numerous and affected all levels

⁶²Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, 3rd Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 409.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Lincoln, 436.

of society. Eventually, they would have liberalized Alexander's government to the point it would have closely represented the constitutional monarchies of today...had they been allowed to continue. Regardless, it is appropriate to list those reforms that were the most influential and liberalizing in their effect.

a. Zemstvo Councils - Alexander established representative bodies, which were largely self-governing⁶⁵ and functioned very much along the lines of district or county board of directors and advisory groups. They had under their control almost all functions of local government, to include health care, education, agriculture, and local trade.⁶⁶ Admittedly, there were responsibilities to the crown which had to be met, but these requirements were far less demanding than at any time in Russian history. In effect, the Zemstvos eliminated the previously indestructible idea of service to the tsar alone.

The Zemstvo system held several advantages for the members. Among these benefits were Russia's first socialized medicine and local educational planning.⁶⁷ But it also held the menacing proposition that men controlled their own

⁶⁵Szamuely, 226-227.

⁶⁶Pipes, 265.

⁶⁷Riasanovsky, 414-415.

destiny...and would have to act and plan accordingly. This point was to become painfully obvious as the reform program progressed.

b. Education - Additionally, Alexander repealed "some of the Draconian restrictions of Nicholas I's final years, such as those on travel abroad and on the number of students attending universities."⁶⁸ Of particular note was the increased government stipends available and the tolerance of the large influx of Jewish students at state universities.

In addition to the stipends and increased minority quotas, there was also a general liberalization of the educational process, which included open debate criticizing government policies, and a shift away from the quasi-military academy establishments of his father. This was a radical change from the reign of Nicholas I, who focused his educational programs more on military drill and command than on true academic reasoning.⁶⁹

c. Economics and International Travel and Trade - For the first time in Russia's history, the state published a budget. Even more remarkable was the fact that this budget was open to public scrutiny, and often added fuel to radical

⁶⁸Ibid., 409.

⁶⁹Marc Raeff, Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1966), 137.

groups who denounced the extravagant policies of the crown. Still, its publication was never rescinded until Alexander III came to power. Additionally, Alexander II established a state bank to lend money to entrepreneurs and monitor economic development in the country through monetary controls.⁷⁰ Finally, he eliminated much of the bureaucratic process for gaining authorization to travel or trade abroad.⁷¹ Ultimately, these policies were intended to encourage an influx of foreign technical knowledge, modernizing Russia's infant industries and overcoming much of its backwardness. The reality, however, was that the political elites saw these policies opening the society to foreign influences, threatening Russia's economic sovereignty, and exposing the country to the uncertainty of international trade. This was, as we will see, a reality the Russian elite could not accept.

d. Abolition of serfdom - Faced with the inevitability that serfdom had to be eliminated to make social progress, and that if he took no action there would be continual uprisings, Alexander reportedly said that, "It would be better to abolish it [serfdom] from above than allow it to be abolished from

⁷⁰A key point here is that the State Bank would **monitor** the economic process, not direct. Admittedly, the bank did continue previous autocratic control in some areas of its purview. But it was far more liberal on balance than the Interior Ministry or Finance Ministry had ever been before.

⁷¹Riasanovsky, 414-419.

below." There were many facets to examine with regards to this reform.⁷² Many of Alexander's concerns centered around the structure of the military, and the apparent inability to: (1) train the peasants, (2) maintain their training, and (3) deploy them from the fields in any semblance of a military organization that would be successful on the modern [Nineteenth Century] battlefield.

On 19 February 1861, after lengthy meditation in the seclusion of his study, Emperor Alexander II signed the Emancipation Decree...It was the miracle that all Russians had been eagerly awaiting, and like any other miracle it was expected to transform everything around in a trice.⁷³

This reform, although only a part of the liberal reforms Alexander instituted, is the most obvious of all since it "directly affected the status of some fifty-two million peasants [roughly an amount equal to today's population of Ukraine], over twenty million of them serfs of private land owners."⁷⁴ Unfortunately, however, the emancipation of the serfs in Russia failed to answer the same question the emancipation of the slaves failed to answer in America...what do these millions, recently emancipated, do to survive? Now that the peasants were no longer tied to the land, their

⁷²A thorough, yet concise discussion of the issue of the Emancipation Decree is covered in Pipes, 162-166.

⁷³Szamuely, 225.

⁷⁴Riasanovsky, 413

unrestricted movement provided at least the potential for severe unrest and social turmoil. For,

once Alexander freed Russian society from the rigid controls his father had imposed, the expectations of public opinion moved ahead at a far more rapid pace than did his reform program. As a result, even though the Emancipation Acts of 1861 were far more generous than anyone had dared to dream when Alexander ascended the throne, they fell far short of Russia's [the serfs and the intelligentsia's] expectations.⁷⁵

And when it became apparent that the millennium was not to be achieved overnight, disillusionment set in.⁷⁶ The reaction to emancipation [which will be covered fully in the next section], however, effectively did away with this tremendous potential for social upheaval.⁷⁷

e. Press and the Intelligentsia - As mentioned above, restrictions on the minorities in the universities, the forming of student groups, and the criticism of government policies were relaxed to an unprecedented extent. In concert with these reforms, Alexander took a new look at the mass media. Eventually, he banned almost all forms of

⁷⁵Lincoln, 437.

⁷⁶Szamuely, 225.

⁷⁷At this point, in particular, it is critical to understand the dichotomy between the Russian political elite and the disenfranchised masses. The emancipation whetted the appetites of the masses for more liberalizing reform...but threatened the power base of the political elite.

censorship,⁷⁸ further opening the political and social process of both criticism and debate.

f. Military reform - As mentioned, the defeat in the Crimea demanded fundamental reforms of the entire military system. Under the auspices of the Military Reform Act of 1874, Alexander totally restructured and redefined the service to the tsar. He shifted his emphasis from a serf-oriented force to supporting a citizen army, made largely of reserves.⁷⁹ The Act, which combined with the positive attributes of the Education Reform, had the added benefit of raising the quality of the soldiers, since they were largely literate as a result of his policies.⁸⁰

g. Judicial - Alexander established, for the first time in Russian history, judicial review and public trial-by-jury totally independent of the administration of the tsar.⁸¹ This radical step went hand-in-hand with the establishment of the Zemstvos, and furthered the Russians' ability to be self-determining and policing. In essence, this was the legal foundation of the liberalizing reforms Alexander established. The Judicial Reform Statute of November 20, 1864, in fact,

⁷⁸Riasanovsky, 414-419.

⁷⁹Ibid., 416.

⁸⁰Lincoln, 579-580.

⁸¹Pipes, 295.

"deprived the Romanovs of absolute control over the dispensation of justice in their Empire, thereby changing the very nature of autocracy in Russia."⁸²

Alexander reformed the entire system, not just civil law. This all-encompassing reform was required by the nature of the new social order, which "had to protect the personal and property rights of Russia's newly emerged citizenry,"⁸³ a citizenry whose lifestyle began to grow anarchical and turbulent by its own standards. Still, "Russia began to take long strides on the road to becoming a modern nation."⁸⁴

But the reforms Alexander instituted, essential in the restructuring of Russia, "had side effects neither he nor his advisers had foreseen."⁸⁵ The most important issue left unsolved by Alexander II was his goal, or the end to the reforms. "The government failed to resolve the fundamental dilemma of change: where to stop. [As a result, there arose radically progressive groups who pushed for further revision.] But neither Alexander II nor certainly his successors were willing to go that far. Instead, they turned against the proponents of more change and fought to preserve the

⁸²Lincoln, 579.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Riasanovsky, 419.

⁸⁵Lincoln, 436.

established order."⁸⁶

Even the great Tsar-Liberator was not comfortable with the pace of the liberal reforms he had enacted. Ultimately, he began to favor a more centralized, structured approach to modernizing Russia. "Decisive change away from reform came, according to most historians, in 1866, following an attempt by an emotionally unbalanced student, Dmitrii Karakazov, to assassinate the emperor."⁸⁷ At this point, it became obvious that the reforms would be overtaken by a much stronger force--the Russian drive for security, stability, and predictability.

Nikitenko, the well-known liberal professor of literature, remarked upon this [revolutionary] propensity, and its probable outcome in his diary under 1862...A terrible fate is being prepared for our country by all these ultra-progressives. And what is it they want? Instead of gradual reforms, instead of rational development, they want a violent transformation, a revolution, which they are trying to induce artificially. The blind fools! As if they didn't know what kind of revolution is the only possible one in Russia! They want to posture on the stage, they want to play at making history--but inevitably they will be the first to be ground down by history and swept away in its maelstrom.⁸⁸

The Tsar, himself, had a strong counterreaction to his own reforms. But in support of Nikitenko, that of the people

⁸⁶Riasanovsky, 420.

⁸⁷Ibid., 421.

⁸⁸Szamuely, 155.

was broader, deeper, and more potentially dangerous. In fact:

Too many hopes had been pinned to the reform, too much had been expected of it too rapidly for its actual advent to produce anything but a feeling of disenchantment and letdown. With expectations keyed up to an ever-rising emotional pitch ever since the young emperor had first proclaimed his intention of emancipating the serfs, public opinion was deeply disappointed by the hard terms imposed upon the peasants...The government, it was felt, had now shot its bolt--and failed...Other ways and means would have to be devised.⁸⁹

Alexander confronted yet another paradox of Russian leadership: the nation, which so desperately needed liberalizing reform to maintain its standing in the international community, was growing increasingly violent toward the reforms which would be its savior. Consequently, Alexander turned toward a more conservative approach to governing Russia. Unfortunately, he found that,

Although the government could not return to the old ways, it could stop advancing on the new road, and try to restrict and limit the effectiveness of the changes. And in fact, it attempted to do so in the second half of Alexander II's reign, Alexander III, and Nicholas II until the Revolution of 1905.⁹⁰

That is to say, once you remove the lid is from Pandora's Box, you cannot replace the evils you release.

⁸⁹Ibid., 228.

⁹⁰Riasanovsky, 419.

2. Reaction

If we are to discern the patterns of the Russian culture in the face of liberal reforms, we must look beyond the reign of the Tsar-Liberator, and examine the reactions to his legacy. Therefore, we must look to the reign of his son, Alexander III, and beyond to understand how the Russians view liberal reforms.

The reaction to Alexander II's reforms intensified, rather than abated, with his death. Because Alexander III perceived the liberal reforms of his father as threatening the power of the tsar, he "set out to restore to the Romanovs' autocracy the power and glory it had known in the early nineteenth century."⁹¹ Consequently, with Alexander III's ascension began a counterreform plan almost equal in scope, yet negative in influence, to that of the Great Reforms. It was, after all, a logical time to stop the reform begun by his father; and the counterreforms played to the strengths of contemporary political opinion--the beliefs of the Russian gentry.⁹² Additionally,

Alexander III saw the recent reforms as threatening the power of the autocracy. As a result, he not only rejected further reform, but actually moved to limit the effects of those changes already implemented. Both he and Nicholas II instituted what have come to be known as

⁹¹Lincoln, 590.

⁹²Riasanovsky, 419-420.

"counterreforms," which actually caused more trouble. The themes were: 1.) Reliance on a gentry which was declining in power, 2.) Orthodoxy-autocracy-nationality⁹³, 3.) Police and direct, compulsive measures.⁹⁴

The magnitude of these counterreforms should not be discounted, especially since they affected as many, if not more, aspects of daily Russian life as the original liberalizing programs. It was a far-reaching plan, and...

over a period of years, reaction [to Alexander II's reforms] also expressed itself in the curbing of the press, in restrictions on the collection of taxes by the zemstvo and on the uses to which these could be put, in the exemption of political and press cases from the regular judicial review.⁹⁵

But these, and other programs, will be covered in more detail later.

While it is true that Alexander III inherited a Russia in which the potential for economic growth and development far surpassed that of any other time in Russian history, it is also true that he was willing to pursue this goal only through policies far more centralized and, "with a far more rigidly

⁹³Riasanovsky points out that part of the foundation of the counterreforms was a reliance on these historical and traditional aspects of Russian civilization--Russian nationalism. Alexander III saw the church and state as inseparable in the old order, and used this pillar as a major theme upon which to rebuild the empire.

⁹⁴Riasanovsky, 433.

⁹⁵Ibid., 421-422.

controlled political framework"⁹⁶ than that established by his father. As a result, Alexander saw his first task as the reestablishment of the tsar's supreme control.

To assist him in the reconsolidation of power, Alexander enlisted the support and theories of noted academicians, themselves Russian conservatives or gentry members. Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Count Serge Witte, and, under Nicholas II, Peter Stolypin all opposed Alexander II's reforms with regards to the zemstvos, legal system, army structure, and the emancipation of the serfs.⁹⁷ The main point to their opposition was that the liberal reforms threatened the consistency [stability and predictability] of Russia by unleashing tremendous social forces with the potential for her destruction.

From this foundation, then, began Alexander III's drive to control the perceived damage his father had wrought on the Russian autocracy. After an examination of his programs, it will be clear that they were, "designed to impose political stability--not further liberal reforms and pluralism in government."⁹⁸ They were intended to curb the sweeping changes introduced by his father and to "buttress the

⁹⁶Lincoln, 589.

⁹⁷Szamuely, 227.

⁹⁸Lincoln, 595.

centralized, bureaucratic, and class nature of the Russian system."⁹⁹

The Manifesto of May 11, 1881 proved Alexander III's determination to suppress revolution and maintain autocracy. And, as a result of his repressive counterreforms and strong tendencies toward russification, "Alexander III has often been considered the first nationalist on the Russian throne."¹⁰⁰

a. Temporary Regulations - Alexander III issued "'Temporary Regulations' to protect state security and public order."¹⁰¹ Their intended purpose was to give appointed bureaucrats the greatest possible liberty in dealing with radical, pro-reform groups (e.g., The Will of the People). And, because they were so vaguely written, they were eventually applied to anyone whom officials suspected or simply disliked. Originally tendered for only three years, the Temporary Regulations were repeatedly renewed, providing Alexander III with a legislative form of martial law.

b. Russification - In keeping with Alexander III's tendency toward russification, several regulations were established which oppressed religious minorities. Some of these regulations: (1) Designated any child who was the

⁹⁹Riasanovsky, 435.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 437.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 434.

product of a mixed marriage (Orthodox and any other religion) as Russian Orthodox, (2) Prohibited all churches but the Russian Orthodox church from proselytizing, and (3) Established mandatory restrictions on travel, education, and trade of Jews.¹⁰² Additionally, Alexander III "authorized campaigns to persecute non-Orthodox religions and to convert populations to Orthodoxy."¹⁰³

c. Establishment of "Land Captains" - Another of Alexander III's counterreforms totally restructured the Zemstvos established by his father. Of particular note was the reinstatement of the gentry as a voting class with disproportionate representation, and the establishment of a petty bureaucrat with unlimited veto power called the "Land Captain."¹⁰⁴ The Land Captain, in fact, was directly responsible to the tsar's administration through the interior ministry, but also held total control in the zemstvo in which he served.¹⁰⁵ This counterreform actually destroyed the politically self-governing Zemstvos.

d. Anti-Semitism - Anti-Semitism was the supreme rule in

¹⁰²Riasanovsky, 434-437.

¹⁰³Lincoln, 593.

¹⁰⁴Riasanovsky, 436.

¹⁰⁵There are some basic similarities here between the Land Captains and what would become, after the 1917 Revolution, Communist Party officials in the towns and villages as well as *Zampolit*, or Political Officers in the military.

Alexander III's russification program. Alexander was particularly concerned about the Jews, which "occupied a prominent place in [his] thoughts and policies throughout his reign, for he was easily one of the most ardent anti-Semites to sit upon the Russian throne."¹⁰⁶ Jews were excluded, in large part, from higher education, operating small businesses, and openly worshipping. There were even mass relocation campaigns which were intended to eliminate the Jews from many of the larger cities. The anti-semite legislation went so far as to make it a crime for a Jew to bear a Christian name. Alexander's confidential decrees against the Jews resulted in treatment similar to the early years of Nazi Germany. These decrees were, in fact, often well-camouflaged, and simply put a nice face on what was intended to be anti-Semitic legislation.¹⁰⁷

e. Forty-Nine year Indemnity Tax (Redemption Payments) -

While Alexander III could not rescind the Emancipation Act of 1861, he did accomplish the next best thing. He established an Indemnity Tax on the former serfs, which would be applied for forty-nine years after their emancipation.¹⁰⁸ This was quite a significant change, since the peasant not

¹⁰⁶Lincoln, 592.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 591-593.

¹⁰⁸Riasanovsky, 413-414.

only had the burden of surviving as a freed man, but also bore the overwhelming yoke of making redemption payments to the tsar; a tax that took almost the entire life expectancy of the peasant (which was approximately 52 years at the time). Alexander III had, in fact, negated his father's progress in social reform.

f. Repeal of the University Program - The University Statute of 1884, which replaced that of 1863, "virtually abolished university autonomy; students could not form groups or organizations, and curtailed higher education for women and minorities."¹⁰⁹ This drastically altered the educational program established under Alexander II. It increased the focus on the military aspects of schooling while severely curtailing academic discussion and criticism of the government. The result: the expulsion of large numbers of minorities and women, and the complete, and now irreversible, destruction of the free thought and much-needed constructive criticism.

g. Oppression of the Intelligentsia and the Elimination of the Free press and Debate - Following from the counterreforms operating in the academic arena, and the stifling of creative and critical thought, came a specific program intended to clamp down on the intelligentsia and its

¹⁰⁹Riasanovsky, 435.

critical debate in the mass media. No longer could they publish journals, let alone articles, which criticized the government. This counterreform rapidly became far more than just an irritant for the intelligentsia, it had, in fact, destroyed the medium of their debate. Alexander III reestablished the custom of censorship in the Russian press, and even eliminated most of the liberal journals and periodical publications.¹¹⁰ "Russia's periodical press had never been so rigidly controlled as it was during the reign of Alexander III."¹¹¹

In conclusion, then, we find that Alexander III's counterreforms were born out of fear, the fear of losing: international prestige through open trade and interaction with the outside world [security]; centralized power and social complacency through continued democratic reform [stability]; and simply the nature of living in Russia, where the orderliness of day-to-day activities provided individuals with continuity throughout their lives [predictability]. Konstantin Pobedonostsev, a high-ranking official under Alexander III best represented the essence of Alexander III's counterreform movement. "The state, he believed, had as its purpose the maintenance of law, order, stability, and unity

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Lincoln, 590.

among men. In Russia, that aim could be accomplished only by the means of autocracy and the Orthodox Church."¹¹²

The elites' conservative reaction to the Great Reforms did not, however, stop with Alexander III. In fact, they not only continued unimpeded, but gathered momentum under Nicholas II, who ascended to the throne in 1894 upon Alexander III's death.¹¹³ Such was, and is, the strength of Russian elite reaction to liberalizing reform. Truly, in this circumstance, the Russian elite had "acted violently against"¹¹⁴ democratic, western-style reforms whose end result **would** have brought them on a more even footing with the great nations of the West.

But this is not the only example of elite reaction to liberal reforms. Almost exactly one hundred years later a similar situation evolved with a leader named Nikita Khrushchev.

¹¹²Riasanovsky, 434.

¹¹³Ibid., 439.

¹¹⁴Taken from Prince K's speech to Marquis de Custine cited earlier. See: Custine, 25.

B. Nikita Khrushchev

"Sometimes [Khrushchev] has bursts of democracy."¹¹⁵
-- Mitya Chernenko

After Stalin's death, the triumvirate that ruled the Soviet Union had to deal with tremendous, destructive problems and a lack of strong leadership to control the bureaucracy. The problems were complex, numerous, and life-threatening for the Soviet Union. Among the most serious to be confronted were: (1) A poor planning system for industry and agriculture, (2) A lack of coordination between all elements of production and distribution, (3) Stalin's forced industrialization, which had caused a general flight from agricultural lands to the privileged industrial cities, and (4) The denial of capital and incentives to the farms, which had resulted in low food production and a poor work ethic.¹¹⁶

When Nikita Khrushchev addressed the 20th Party Congress and made "The Basic Indictment" against the personality cult of Stalin, it was clear to all a new era had begun.¹¹⁷ Often forgotten, but certainly important, is Khrushchev's claim that the Soviet Union would now be ruled according to Lenin's Last

¹¹⁵Petro G. Grigorenko, Memoirs, Trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 249.

¹¹⁶Harry Schwartz, ed. Russia Enters the 1960s (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1962), 180.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 17-27.

Testament.¹¹⁸ No longer could the Stalinists hide what the founder of the nation had intended...the Last Testament would be the last word in furthering socialism and attaining communism. But Khrushchev was still vulnerable, and was not able to totally consolidate his power until two years later. "Finally, in March 1958, Bulganin, who had been disloyal to Khrushchev the preceding year, resigned as head of the government. Khrushchev himself replaced Bulganin, thus combining the supreme effective authority of the Party and of the state."¹¹⁹ Khrushchev now had *carte blanche* to carry out the reforms he deemed necessary to compete with the west.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸Ibid., 19.

¹¹⁹Riasanovsky, 600.

¹²⁰At this point, we must remember that the ideology of various leaders is not the subject of our study. The fundamental issue examined is the liberal nature of reforms in the historical and cultural context. That Khrushchev had ideological, or perhaps, even personal, motives is immaterial when one considers the reality of his reforms' impact on the Russians.

1. Reforms

a. Opening of debate -

In September [1953] Khrushchev made an important statement on agriculture that indicated an increase in his power...and at the same time admitted more bluntly than had ever been done before the horrifying state of the collective farms.¹²¹

From 1953 until 1962, Khrushchev allowed freedom of speech, press, and of the arts to a degree unknown for almost forty years. Of particular note was the work of Aram Khachaturian, Dmitry Shostakovich, Eugene Evtushenko ("Babii Yar"), Alexander Solzhenitsyn (One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich), G.F. Alexandrov (The History of West European Philosophy), Ilia Ehrenburg (The Thaw) and others who were moderately liberal by western standards, but radical when compared with the standards of Stalin's era. Admittedly, there was some repression. But, "for the most part... Khrushchev's regime confined itself to verbal warnings and refusals to publish or exhibit, and the limits of the permissible, though fluctuating, were certainly broader than before Stalin's death."¹²²

At the 22d Party Congress, Khrushchev again made bold strides toward opening public discussion to all aspects of

¹²¹Donald V. Treadgold, Twentieth Century Russia (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1981), 440.

¹²²Treadgold, 442-458.

Soviet life. A key aspect of this liberalization was forcing the party to accept an ongoing, legitimate debate of all its elements from theory to bureaucratic practice. Consistent with this theme, Khrushchev remarked,

Is this emergence of various opinions inside the Party at various stages of its activity, especially at turning points, possible? It is possible. How is one to deal with those who express an opinion differing from that of others? We are in favor of applying the Leninist methods of persuasion and exploitation in such cases and not repressive measures.¹²³

Admittedly, statements like this are proof not of liberal reform but of anti-Stalinist policy. However, it must also be acknowledged that, while the new policy had the theoretical base in discrediting the previous regime, it also had a practical application which allowed criticism and debate unknown since the early 1920s to flourish in the Soviet Union...a definite step toward the liberal democratic principle of free speech.

b. Legal and Electoral Reform - Hand-in-hand with Khrushchev's own form of *glasnost*, or 'openness,' came an attempt to establish the importance of the law and of the ballot. Proof of this can be seen in the divestiture plan, which revived the system of local judicial review. "In 1959, a device long intermittently used was energetically revived:

¹²³Nikita S. Khrushchev as cited in Schwartz, 123.

the comrade's courts, in which one's neighbors and fellow workers might mete out certain punishments for social delinquency."¹²⁴ These courts were, in fact, wholly independent from the central bureaucracy in petty civil and misdemeanor crimes. And, while we must admit that this reform produced mock courts whose power was abused, we must also acknowledge that it had, at its foundation, an egalitarian principle...independent judicial review.

If the reestablishment of a form of judicial review and the opening of the Party apparatus to discussion are not sufficient to qualify as liberal reforms, certainly Khrushchev's claim that the leadership must respond to the constituency indicates a generally liberal atmosphere. His exact words were:

A leader promoted to his position by the Party and the people should not abuse his power...the collective of leaders should realize that it is impermissible to allow a situation where anyone, even the most deserving person, could cease to recognize the views of those who promoted him to his position.¹²⁵

From 1956 to his removal in 1964, Khrushchev relied heavily on the Party's voting apparatus to amass support for his reform programs. Perhaps the most dramatic of several examples of his reliance on representative voting is the

¹²⁴Treadgold, 456.

¹²⁵Schwartz, 133.

attempted coup in 1957.

Khrushchev espoused reforms which would fundamentally restructure much of Soviet society. This, in turn, caused friction between him and the more conservative Communist Party elite. In fact, "one of the main sources of these frictions was Khrushchev's determination to effect significant reforms in the institutions and operating procedures of Soviet Political life."¹²⁶ Consequently, the other members of the triumvirate wanted to remove him from office before their power was threatened.¹²⁷ When they confronted Khrushchev, he challenged the legal basis for their decision to oust him by saying he was voted in by the entire presidium...he must be voted out by the same organization. In effect, Khrushchev called for an immediate "vote of confidence" from the electoral body to which he was responsible.

Thanks to some shrewd political maneuvering, and the use of military airplanes to transport delegates back to Moscow, he eventually sponsored a referendum on whether or not he should resign. The delegates, stunned that such a dilemma should come "out of the blue," refused to entertain that idea. After their vote, it was clear that Khrushchev won the battle

¹²⁶Michael J. Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, and the West: From Khrushchev to Gorbachev (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 44.

¹²⁷Treadgold, 455.

to remain in power.¹²⁸ The end result: a government referendum carried more power than the desires of those controlling the government.

Although unsuccessful in eliminating Khrushchev, the opposition learned a valuable lesson: to remove this crass little man from office now requires a majority vote from the elected body...not just the will of those at the top. The 1964 opposition would not repeat the mistake of those who had gone before.

At this point, a critic could suggest that Khrushchev's reforms of law and voting procedures were liberalizing only if they applied to all sectors of society. To reply to that criticism we have only to look at the evidence, which suggests that the rules worked against Khrushchev as well as for him. For example, when General Petro Grigorenko criticized Khrushchev's policies and growing personality cult at a Party meeting, he used the Party bylaws to continue his presentation in the face of conservative opposition.¹²⁹ The short-term result was that Grigorenko was allowed, after a vote of the delegates, to finish his entire speech (an unprecedented occurrence for a speaker so critical of the leadership). And, although the long-term result was harsh (he was

¹²⁸Grigorenko, 224.

¹²⁹Ibid., 240.

'excommunicated' from the Party), he was not executed as had often been the practice in the Soviet Union.

Therefore, we see that the double-edged sword of legal action and legitimate voting, a sword which Khrushchev himself removed from its scabbard unburnished, could be wielded by both the king and the pawn in the political game, and the rules applied to ruler and plebeian alike. Consequently, we can debate Khrushchev's decrees, and perhaps even tag them as useless monologue founded in anti-Stalinist politics. But, the practical applications of his legal and electoral reforms, as shown above, proved his policy was more than just empty rhetoric. It was, indeed, a fundamental shift toward a more liberal government.

c. Rehabilitation - Much as a priest cleanses the souls of sinners during mass, Khrushchev cleansed the soul of the party in the late 1950s and early 1960s through his policy of rehabilitation. This policy forgave the transgressions, most of which were Stalinist fabrications, of individuals liquidated during Stalin's purges.¹³⁰ Prior to the rehabilitations, the families of those damned by the Party received privileges and rations limited by their relative's

¹³⁰The subject of the Great Purges, or *Bolshiye Chistki*, is a fascinating one in and of itself. For an excellent discussion of the reasons behind, actions during, and consequences of the Great Purges, Let History Judge by Roy A. Medvedev (New York: Vintage Books, 1971) is highly recommended.

transgressions. Afterward, all was forgiven and life could proceed without the stigma that had been previously attached.

At first examination, this policy may not appear to be a politically liberal one.¹³¹ However, it is widely accepted that the context and intent with which it was delivered (to correct the problems and condemnations of the personality cult) was one of the first steps toward eliminating a bureaucratic prejudice of the regime.¹³² This, in turn, paved the way for equal treatment of citizens and their families, and went a long way toward providing the benefits of the Soviet system to all members of society.

Khrushchev ended the use of executions as a means of eliminating political crimes, preferring, instead, to hold Party trials to determine the appropriate punishment.¹³³ Proof of this was his elimination of Kaganovich, and Bulganin who were simply removed from office and retired with a modest but adequate pension.¹³⁴

d. Agriculture and Economics - In the areas of agriculture and economics, Khrushchev instituted a system of incentive payment for Soviet managers, decreased government

¹³¹Treadgold, 446.

¹³²Schwartz, 125-127.

¹³³Treadgold, 452.

¹³⁴Schwartz, 129.

subsidies of consumer goods and promoted what could have been the beginning of a market-based system (albeit, with communist idiosyncracies). When he first came to power, Khrushchev treated private plots as incentive. That is to say, he saw the profit made from selling private plot produce as a benefit and an incentive for the peasant.¹³⁵ As a result, until about 1957, there were no penalties for those with entrepreneurial spirit.¹³⁶

In addition to these modest steps, he also restructured the entire planning system, which included planning input from the local production facilities and Party leaders and local control of production capital.¹³⁷ He placed the control of the capital into the hands of 105 new Economic Councils (Sovnarkhozi)¹³⁸ and abolished the State Economic Commission.¹³⁹ This was, indeed, a radical suggestion compared to the Stalinist model. It was also a system which

¹³⁵Treadgold, 440.

¹³⁶Riasanovsky, 607.

¹³⁷Of particular note in this restructuring program is the elimination of the state-run tractor pools, which held all major farm machinery, and allocated it according to the Five-Year Plan. Under the new system, collective and state farms kept and used the equipment as they needed it. This proved to be a double-edged sword as they also had to maintain it...often without sufficient technical training or tools.

¹³⁸Treadgold, 455.

¹³⁹Ibid., 451.

divested the control of capital, labor, and one's own life to the individuals concerned. The result of Khrushchev's restructuring was "to enhance the power of **local** [emphasis added] Party secretaries at the expense of the Moscow ministerial bureaucracy."¹⁴⁰

He stretched the planning cycle from five to seven years, and added perhaps the most liberal revision of any leader--a periodic review of the production goals and output **by the local governments, not the central planning authority.**¹⁴¹

While, admittedly, most of the reforms listed above were undertaken as part of a De-Stalinization plan, they were also part of a package which sought to increase participation, representation, initiative, competition, and the freedom of internal and external trade by divesting power and the planning process to the local levels. Compared to Stalin, this was, indeed, a liberal concept. In political structure, agriculture, economics, and other areas it does appear that,

during the Khrushchev era there were serious efforts made toward bending, though not breaking, centralized control by moving some major operational decisionmaking responsibility to the production level. Few significant and no spectacular gains were evident.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 451.

¹⁴¹ Khrushchev as cited in Schwartz, 181-191.

¹⁴² Herman, 123.

2. Reaction

When we look back at Khrushchev's regime, we come to realize that, actually, 1958 was probably his zenith. "Disillusionments followed in rapid succession. Economic development went sour; Khrushchev's exhortations and his economic, administrative, and party reorganizations...were increasingly ineffective in resolving the crisis."¹⁴³

There was also increased criticism of his routine handling of the bureaucratic system.¹⁴⁴ To put it bluntly, some saw his personality cult as growing to rival that of Stalin. When they said so, as was the case with Soviet General Petro Grigorenko, they were removed from public office, disgraced, and often placed in sanatoriums...but they were not shot.¹⁴⁵

From what we know of the Russian political culture, we can see that an elite conservative reaction, which would reestablish control and provide security, stability, and predictability, would be in order. In an eerie parallel to Alexander II, the conservative reaction began even before Khrushchev was forced out of office. "What stood out with growing clarity was the staunchly conservative nature of the

¹⁴³Riasanovsky, 600-601.

¹⁴⁴Sodaro 46.

¹⁴⁵Grigorenko, 126.

[Soviet] ruling coalition's stance on such issues as the division of Germany and the need for a substantial reinforcement of Soviet military strength."¹⁴⁶

But international politics was not the only area in which the conservative elites considered Khrushchev threatening. "Nikita's libertarian experiment, in particular his constant attempt to shuffle those at higher levels, made him *persona non grata* in the highest levels of bureaucracy."¹⁴⁷ Suddenly, not only were the security, stability, and predictability of **Russia** threatened, but those of the **apparatchiki** (political elite) were endangered as well.

Sensing the offing in the wind, Khrushchev turned increasingly autocratic,¹⁴⁸ lending credence to the "Good Khrushchev--Bad Khrushchev" reputation he has since acquired.¹⁴⁹ But this change came too late. In April of 1964 he was removed from power by a conservative Soviet coup. This situation provided the impetus for a conservative elite reaction to Khrushchev's liberal reforms. Leonid Brezhnev was the embodiment of that reaction.

Clearly, the ideal conservative replacement for a

¹⁴⁶Sodaro, 72.

¹⁴⁷Grigorenko, 288.

¹⁴⁸This action bears a striking similarity to that of Alexander II. See page 42.

¹⁴⁹Riasanovsky, 601.

revisionist like Khrushchev would be an *apparatchik* with a taste for the *status quo* and the desire for the stability and predictability of "business as usual." To that end, Leonid Brezhnev was chosen as Khrushchev's successor. And, in a fitting tribute to Khrushchev's fundamental changes of the system, the ex-Premier did not 'die in office,' nor was he executed. He was merely removed, disgraced, and given a *dacha* and retirement pension on which to live out his life in obscurity.¹⁵⁰

When Brezhnev ascended to power his "first order of business was to undo some of the 'hare-brained schemes' [he] accused Khrushchev of perpetrating...[Eventually,] as the post-Khrushchev leadership sought its bearings, its domestic orientations assumed a distinctly conservative cast."¹⁵¹ As part of Brezhnev's consolidation of power, he too embarked on a program which he claimed would develop socialism in the USSR, moving ever-closer to the elusive communist goal. But, while this program appeared to promise much of the liberalization included in Khrushchev's plan, the reality was something quite different.

¹⁵⁰For a superb account of Khrushchev's fall from power, and the Brezhnev era see: Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich, Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present, trans. Phyllis B. Carlos (New York: Summit Books, A Div. of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1986), 597-701.

¹⁵¹Sodaro, 73.

Brezhnev's programme had been a radical-sounding one: the modernisation of the Soviet Union into what was called 'developed socialism', accompanied by the 'scientific management of society'....Brezhnev relied on the party to co-ordinate development and thus eschewed a shift to the market and decentralisation....and avoided greater autonomy for soviets and other mass participatory bodies.¹⁵²[sic]

We find then, that after twelve years at the helm, the net result of Khrushchev's liberal reforms was almost nil. While progress had been made on many fronts, "nearly all of his changes...[had] been invalidated through a gradual reinstitution of strong central planning control."¹⁵³ After a decade of liberal reform, during which the Soviet Union had made its two steps forward, the backwards step took the form of the Brezhnev regime.¹⁵⁴ The story of Yulii Daniel and Andrei Senyavskii, writers who criticized the Soviet regime during the early years of Brezhnev's watch, gives us some insight into this transition to conservative rule:

The trial of Yulii Daniel and Andrei Sinyavskii in early 1966 signaled a new toughness in the Kremlin's dealings with dissidents in the cultural community. DeStalinization became a relic of the Khrushchev period.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵²Richard Sakwa, Gorbachev and his Reforms (1985-1990) (New York: Philip Allan, 1992), 20.

¹⁵³Herman, 123.

¹⁵⁴Heller, 600-604.

¹⁵⁵Sodaro, 73.

IV. Transition to Today

A. Gorbachev's Inheritance

After reviewing the liberal reforms of Alexander II and Nikita Khrushchev, we see striking similarities in both the impetus behind and the elite reaction to liberalization. Both reforms questioned the fundamental structure of society. Both reforms attempted to open the bureaucratic mechanism to the *masspolitik* to correct societal deficiencies. Both reforms caused the conservative elite to coalesce into a reactionary group which undermined liberalization efforts.

Understanding this political heritage is key to our thesis, especially if we are to evaluate modern liberal reforms and their most likely outcome. Using our methodology and the results of previous attempts, we can now turn to our goal--evaluating the liberal reforms of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev from 1985 to 1990 and the resulting implications.

Unfortunately, in attempting this we run headlong into a problem confronting scholars studying any part of what was the Soviet Union--primary source material. This problem arises from two points: First, much of the material covering debates about key issues remains classified (even under *Glasnost'*) and

is, therefore, unavailable. Second, much of what **is** available was severely influenced by party propaganda, subject to bureaucratic approval, or simply (as witnessed during the accident at Chernobyl) lies.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, it may well take years of painstaking research and interpretation to produce an accurate account of any of the aspects of Soviet policy.¹⁵⁷

Therefore, much of our examination of Gorbachev's reforms will rely on his personal statement of *Perestroika's* formulation and goals, as well as several substantial foreign (to the Soviet Union) works on the apparent programs and their effects. Ultimately, however, we will see that like his liberalizing ancestors, Gorbachev paid the price for threatening Russian security, stability, and predictability.

B. *Perestroika*

To examine Gorbachev's restructuring of the Soviet society is to undertake a complex endeavor. First, westerners should be aware that the term *perestroika* is a word with many interpretations. The Soviets' own Russian-English Dictionary

¹⁵⁶Fundamentally, this is a statement of the obvious to most Soviet analysts. But the degree of 'misrepresentation' of the sources can vary, and therefore be useless in providing any consistent evaluation. A monograph which covers these points as part of its major theme is David Marples' *Ukraine Under Perestroika: Ecology, Economics, and the Workers' Revolt* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

¹⁵⁷Robert Conquest, presentation on Soviet Archival Studies at the Stanford-Berkeley Conference on Russian Studies (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University, 10 April 1992).

list the primary meanings as:

Perestroika- 1. [construction] re-building, reconstruction;
2. [ideological] re-orientation...a reformation of
procedure.¹⁵⁸

But in Gorbachev's usage, this special term had but one application, one meaning--a complete rebuilding or redirecting accomplished by razing existing structures and starting anew to build communism..."a 'revolution in the hearts and minds of the people.'¹⁵⁹ Bearing this in mind, we can now proceed to examine the reforms of Mikhail Sergeyevich.

Gorbachev's political background is well-documented. His first major accomplishment was an innovative agricultural program which yielded 30-50 percent more crops in an area near Stavropol. While his program was controversial (Khrushchev-style innovation during the Brezhnev era), he was allowed to continue to experiment. Eventually, he gained the attention and confidence of those at the pinnacle of the Party--namely Yuri Andropov. In March of 1985, he came to power "as the candidate of those who wanted change, or at least realised it

¹⁵⁸Rusko-Angliskee Slovar' (Russian-English Dictionary), ed. by A. E. Smernitz (Moscow: Russian Language Publishers, 1977), Printed-Russian to English, 418.

¹⁵⁹Dev Murarka, Gorbachev: The Limits of Power (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 54-56; as cited in Geoffrey A. Hosking, The Awakening of the Soviet Union (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 130.

could no longer be postponed."¹⁶⁰

But, when Gorbachev came to power, it was by no means a political cakewalk. The old guard of the Party realized that many problems were reaching 'critical mass', but they were reluctant to abandon the security they had known during the Brezhnev era (and was implicit under Chernenko and Andropov). Eventually, realizing the country was in deep economic and political trouble, the Party settled on Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev to lead them to the promised land. The legacy which Gorbachev inherited was one of

declining economic growth rate, stagnant if not falling standards of living, and growing corruption, but also the basic principles on which the Soviet system was based appeared in need of a radical overhaul.¹⁶¹

The first year, in particular, had its trying moments for the man the Party elected to save them from destruction. For,

Only a year after becoming General Secretary, Gorbachev had to cope with the nuclear reactor explosion at Chernobyl, followed by massive earthquakes in Armenia and Central Asia. At the same time, there was a series of droughts combined with excessive heat and premature cold, all of which had a serious impact on the Soviet harvest. On top of everything else, the world price of oil dropped. Since petroleum had accounted for over 60 percent of the Soviet Union's hard currency earnings, this reduced the country's ability to pay for its imports. Nor did it help

¹⁶⁰Hosking, 127.

¹⁶¹Sakwa, 20.

when the Soviet Union was forced to import more grain to compensate for the poor harvests.¹⁶²

With the legacy mentioned above, Gorbachev recognized that economic reform was essential to maintain the viability of the Soviet Union. But this economic reform, whatever shape it would take, held some inherent risks. As an economic reformer, Gorbachev would have to combat the determined and fearful bureaucrats to implement any changes which decentralized Soviet economic structure. Ultimately,

he [was] faced with two alternatives. Either the reforms fail, in which case perestroika [was] doomed, and the Soviet Union [would] probably fall apart and certainly cease to be a great power. Or they will succeed, engendering working-class unrest and ethnic tension to a degree which [could] well strain the resources of the state.¹⁶³

After seventy years of communist rule, the economic reality, at the level of the citizenry, was best summarized in Sacks and Jerry Pankhurst's Understanding Soviet Society:

However badly the Soviet economy works, Soviet citizens--among them the majority working class--have learned to 'work' it. This working class is not as easily manipulated for reasons of greater education attainment...Its potential to react in ways that are

¹⁶²Marshall Goldman, "Gorbachev the Economist," Foreign Affairs (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, Spring 1990, Vol. 69, No. 2), 30.

¹⁶³Hosking, 138.

undermining and disruptive, if not militant, to an economic package it finds unpleasant and, by its standards, unfair, is significant.¹⁶⁴

To deal with the economic crisis confronting the Soviet Union, Gorbachev claimed strength from the greatest of all revolutionaries, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.¹⁶⁵ In Perestroika, Gorbachev wrote, "We have to look back at the sources of our Great Revolution to realize what kind of society emerged from it and why we need another revolution of no less importance."¹⁶⁶

Gorbachev, himself, delivered the most concise statement of his economic reforms during the 1987 plenary meeting in Moscow. Under the presumption of working from the central authority to the edge (reform from above, as **he** called it), he espoused fundamental changes in the economic structure of the Soviet Union. Chief among these reforms were¹⁶⁷:

1. A change to enterprise with complete cost accounting.
2. A change [unspecified] in the economic planning system.
3. A change in the price formula and subsidy system.

¹⁶⁴Understanding Soviet Society, ed. Michael Sacks and Jerry Pankhurst (Boston: Allen & Unwin, Inc., 1988), 49.

¹⁶⁵Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 52.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 163.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 29.

4. A restructuring of foreign economic ties.

To summarize, it is significant that Gorbachev spent so much of his book on the economic situation. Clearly, he saw this as the greatest threat to the Soviet Union, and all others paled in comparison with it. Consequently, he implemented reforms which are radically liberal in the context of the Soviet system. The establishment of cooperatives, election of managers, self-financed factories, encouragement of individual enterprise in small-scale production and trade, and closing non-paying factories are all radical economic ideas which Gorbachev instituted. Clearly, Gorbachev designed these reforms to move the Soviet Union toward a more efficient, market-based system. Also, we cannot fail to see the decentralization and independence required by such measures. But, there is no stronger evidence that his economic reform was liberalizing than his own call to, "wake up" those who have "fallen asleep" and make them truly active and concerned to ensure that **"everyone feels as if he is the master of the country, of his enterprise, office, or institute. This is the main thing."**¹⁶⁸ [emphasis added]

In addition to his economic reforms, and in an uncanny parallel to Khrushchev¹⁶⁹, Gorbachev called for the Party to

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹See pages 55-56.

recognize the diversity of opinion...to accept differing views as beneficial to the state. To accomplish this, he called for the Party to work closely with the intelligentsia (film-makers, writers, artists, composers, architects, theatrical figures, and journalists) to thoroughly investigate and discuss issues confronting the failing country.¹⁷⁰

Finally, we can turn, yet again, to Gorbachev to discern the true purpose of his reforms. After examining the evidence, we see that late in 1987 he published his monograph, Perestroika, in which he perfectly summarizes both the method and the goal of his liberal reforms:

The main idea of the January Plenary meeting -- as regards to ways of accomplishing the tasks of Perestroika and protecting society from a repetition of the errors of the past -- was the development of democracy.¹⁷¹

C. Reaction

Unfortunately, much as Alexander II and Khrushchev, Gorbachev fell prey to his own programs. What started out as an "urgent necessity"¹⁷² to maintain the place of the Soviet Party turned into a desperate grasp for power. As he neared what would be his last days, rumors of military coups and

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 81.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 63

¹⁷²Ibid., 18.

secret Party meetings abounded. Yet, Gorbachev was initially unwilling, if not unable, to quell the unrest of the conservatives. In the end even Gorbachev felt threatened and pulled back from his reformist stance. Indeed, his "ability to maintain a sort of split personality as both Party man and [reformer] was what enabled him to shatter the Stalinist system."¹⁷³ Although he was a political chameleon, the reaction to liberalization began, once again, with the reformer himself.

Criticism also came from the ranks of the elites, who had condemned, yet tolerated, much of Gorbachev's reforms. Yet, we must, in all honesty, state that,

Gorbachev's failures are not surprising. Consider what he proposed to do; take a huge, multinational empire that had been created by force and coercion; give it a large measure of democracy, while loosening all the traditional bonds that held it together.¹⁷⁴

The ultimate conservative elite reaction, the coup (*putsch*) of August 12, 1992, signalled the practical end of Gorbachev's ruling coalition. While he continued in power for another four months, he was, in fact, a lame-duck ruler. During this time he could only acquiesce to the popular demands as voiced by Boris Yeltsin.

¹⁷³Robert G. Kaiser, "Gorbachev, Triumph and Failure," Foreign Affairs (Spring 1991, Vol. 70, No. 2), 160.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 163.

Unlike Alexander II, the opposing liberals successfully replaced the ruling elite. But they, too, had to overcome the Russo-Soviet bureaucratic inertia and cultural baggage. As we look at today's mounting opposition to Yeltsin's reform package, we realize that the liberal program initiated under *Perestroika* may well have completed the second step of political progress in the pattern of Russian liberal reforms.

V. Conclusion

With the bulk of the thesis completed it is now clear that there are, indeed, cultural values at work within the circles of the political elite which oppose even Yeltsin's liberal reforms. The 'free' media, itself a creation of Gorbachev's *Perestroika*, reports that the understanding of a free market system and the acceptance of further liberal reform are rapidly decreasing as stability, predictability, and security are increasingly threatened.¹⁷⁵ In addition to the elite reaction, a greater number of Russians than at any time since the August coup associate themselves with either a pro-Communist or highly conservative political movement.¹⁷⁶ Evidence suggests that the people are indeed growing weary of reform and its accompanying hardships.

We should not find this surprising, especially if there has been no social upheaval and restructuring since the last attempts at liberal reform. Indeed, our historical

¹⁷⁵Arnold Horelick, presentation under the auspices of The Annual Donald M. Kendall Lecture (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University, 18 May 1992).

¹⁷⁶Adrian Karatnicky, presentation to Modern Ukraine class (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 18 April 1992).

examination of the culture under liberal reform indicates that some progress will be made, but that much will be undone in a conservative backlash to the liberal reforms; thus perpetuating the pattern of two steps forward and one back. But before we accept this prognosis, we must consider competing views and their merit.

A. Competing Views

As a result of our investigation, we find that there remains some doubt as to whether Russia can channel today's potential for civil strife into a conduit for creative and pro-democratic actions. However, just as there is a large body of pessimism on this subject, there is also a great deal of optimism. Ultimately, "the issue becomes existential...can they do it?"¹⁷⁷

Many in the west (like Mr. Gates) take the cautious approach and claim it is too early to tell. At the other end of the spectrum, many cite the achievements of Russian entrepreneurs as proof that it may, in fact, be possible to create a market economy and liberal democracy in Russia. It is necessary, then, for us to examine parts of this spectrum of opinion to strengthen our study, and to acknowledge detracting theories. If for no other reason, we must do so to

¹⁷⁷ Nancy Kollman, presentation at Stanford-Berkley Conference, (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University, 10 April 1992).

rebut the criticism that this thesis is overly deterministic and fails to recognize some fundamental differences in mass media, communications, education, and other key differences between the country of the two previous liberal reforms and the Russia of today. Indeed, many cite the Russian entrepreneurial spirit mentioned earlier and ask, "Why can't they develop like Western states? After all, the Russian people seem a lot like Americans."

The three major arguments in favor of Russia becoming a liberal democracy address both the internal and external aspects of societal development. And, while these arguments are the strongest to be made, they are also fundamentally flawed. Each one ignores some important social aspects that can be responsible for democracy's undoing.

There are two internal counter-arguments which focus on the progress already evident in the Russian political system. The first of these emphasizes the role of the media and the education of the masses. This argument proposes that the Russians are better-educated than at any other time in their history. Their literacy rate, technical knowledge, and access to a free press are sufficient enough to affect a liberal change of the entire society -- including the conservative

political elites.¹⁷⁸ The claim, then, is that the educated Russian masses, can force the bureaucracy to effect liberal changes in the governing system.

While this is possible, the idea that the masses have ever been able to change the political system of Russia is not supported in her history. And, given the premise of our study (cultural-historical bias), if we cannot establish a tradition or mechanism for such changes, we cannot fully support this argument. Even if we the masses were to act independent of their heritage, we would also have to acknowledge the impending elite reaction (e.g., Yeltsin's authoritarian mood swings) and its effect on the masses. This gives rise to the possibility that Russia may go the way of Germany in the interwar years, where one of the most advanced countries of the twentieth century manipulated its press, social studies, and popular opinion to diabolical ends.¹⁷⁹ Clearly, media influence and education alone are not sufficient for irreversibly democratizing Russia.

The second argument emphasizes the role of the Russian

¹⁷⁸ Archie Brown, "Ideology and Political Culture," Politics, Society, and Nationality Inside Gorbachev's Russia, ed. Seweryn Bialer (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 21.

¹⁷⁹ A superior work covering the academic, scientific, and social perversion of Germany through the media in the interwar years is Michael Burleigh's Germany Turns Eastward: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

intelligentsia and its influence on the formation of political structure and theory both in the power center and among the populace. This argument states that the Russians have been making progress all along, and that the intelligentsia have been the moving force behind the advances. The intelligentsia will, therefore, be the foundation for political enlightenment, and will point the way to liberal democracy.¹⁸⁰

Interestingly enough, one of the chief proponents of this theme, Dr. Nancy Kollman of Stanford, delivered a presentation which all but dismissed this as a solution to the problem of establishing a liberal democracy. When speaking of the intelligentsia, she stated that, "They still seem to hold onto the baggage of Russian nationalism... They still think in terms of a grand scheme [for Russia]."¹⁸¹ Continuing on, Dr. Kollman stated that some Russian scholars have, indeed, opened their debates on history and politics, but not all have made the changeover. Scholars are still reluctant to throw out the Marxist-historical concept and, as a result, rely on this while searching for a new paradigm. Therefore, they are confronted with the overpowering task of forming a coherent

¹⁸⁰Moshe Lewin, The Gorbachev Phenomenon (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 124.

¹⁸¹Nancy Kollman, presentation at Stanford-Berkley Conference (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University, 10 April 1992).

theory of government not only with little foundation of liberal democratic theory, but while trying to overcome their inherent Marxist bias.

In its original form, this argument also asserts that the Russian masses, as a result of the interaction with the intelligentsia, are now participating in the political debate, and are helping to form the foundation of a liberal democratic movement.¹⁸² This tenet, however, relies on citations from letters to government officials and democratic activists, which favor liberalizing change. Unfortunately, the reality is that, "we do not want to treat the letters of the Russian peasants to the power center as a true reflection of what [they], as a class, feel...they are often biased by radicals or influenced by the personage to whom they write."¹⁸³ Consequently, we return to the society's socialization process as having the overriding influence on the Russian people.

It seems, then, that the influence of the Russian intelligentsia may be overstated, or at least misunderstood. Certainly, in fomenting public opinion and acting as a catalyst for many uprisings, the intelligentsia has repeatedly clashed with the autocratic government. Traditionally, this

¹⁸²James H. Billington, address to the House of the Academy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 8 January 1992).

¹⁸³Robert Conquest, Stanford-Berkley Conference on Russian Studies (Palo Alto, CA: Date April 1992).

animosity has not strengthened the intelligentsia's appeal for the masses. In fact, by segregating itself from service to the tsar in the early 1800s, the intelligentsia severed its only ties with a source of mass socialization -- the government.¹⁸⁴

So, one could conclude that the intelligentsia has, indeed, played a role in liberalizing Russia over the years. But one must also acknowledge that role has been small, and that the progress made has followed the pattern of two steps forward and one back. The answer to the problem of rapidly liberalizing Russia lies not in the intelligentsia's hands alone.

The third major argument supporting the formation of a liberal democracy in Russia focuses on external factors. Drawing from historic parallels, this theory proposes that societies do, indeed, change as a result of external inputs. The overwhelming evidence can be found in both the Japanese and German reconstruction earlier this century. Additionally, proponents cite the continuing liberal advances of such societies, whose authoritarian past would seem to doom any possible liberalization, as proof that the Russian society

¹⁸⁴Marc Raeff, Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth Century Nobility (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966), 167-171.

could also rapidly become democratic.¹⁸⁵

This argument is far more supportable than the first two, and must therefore be examined carefully to discern its significance. It strikes right to the heart of this thesis by implying that history is not generally prescriptive, and that societies can, and do, change in opposition to their heritage. But the aspects which discredit this theory can be found in two particular characteristics, which are very closely related -- the length of time required and the degree of external interaction needed to effect such change. Because these characteristics are so closely related, we will deal with them together.

Truthfully, we must concede that both Germany and Japan made the liberal transformation in a remarkably short time. But the social revolutions of these successful nations must take into account the second aspect -- the amount of external influence required for the transition. Indeed, there seems to be a direct correlation to the degree of external influence and time required to become a liberal government. For example, both Japan and Germany made rapid transformations. Is it a coincidence that both were occupied immediately following World War II, and that the allies restructured their

¹⁸⁵Donald Abenheim, discussions on Russian liberalization (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 7 May 1992).

entire political system?¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, can the political stability which occurred during the early years of liberal reform be segregated from the presence of foreign troops on their soil? Looking specifically at Germany, we must acknowledge that there are, indeed, correlations to be made between allied presence, a discredited right-wing movement, and the creation of a liberal democratic government.

It appears, then, that without external interaction similar in size and scope to the examples cited (Germany and Japan), the chances of Russia becoming a liberal democracy in the next ten or even twenty years are extremely limited. We can now answer a previous question ("Why can't they be like us?") with the following:

Any comparative judgements about Russian and American political behavior even today must consider the four or five centuries of profound divergence between the two traditions--one despotic, centralized, bureaucratic, hierarchical; the other constitutional, decentralized, individualist, egalitarian (at least with respect to legal and political rights). It is hard to conceive of two more disparate lines of historical development.¹⁸⁷

Finally, we can examine the counter-arguments in the Russian context we established and see that there is precious

¹⁸⁶This was especially true in the case of Japan. MacArthur would not turn over the newly established, western-style government to home rule until he was assured the ultra-conservatives could not return to power.

¹⁸⁷Robert V. Daniels, Russia: Roots of Confrontation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 38.

little evidence that supports their conclusions in the absence of a cultural revolution; a revolution that cannot take place without a tremendous influx of western-style liberal democratic culture. Indeed, if the U.S. is to assist Russia in making the transition, it must become intertwined at all levels of economics, politics, and even defense to provide support for further democratization.

B. Implications for the Future

The continuing disarray and lack of ideological direction in the Soviet Union will likely result in various negative developments, such as the resurgence of the army, new waves of refugees to other countries, and an increase in the number of technological accidents. The West should be prepared for a long period of turmoil in the Soviet Union. --Dmitrii Shlapentokh

We arrive at our conclusion, then, with a much more enlightened view of the process of liberal reform in Russia. It is clear, for example, that the continuity of Russian history plays a major role in the development of society. Each of the reformers, Alexander II, Khrushchev, and Gorbachev, implemented reform plans designed to bring Russia (or the Soviet Union) into the modern world. Each reform threatened the political elite and their core values of security, stability, and predictability. And, ultimately, each program bore the seeds of its own destruction by failing to institute reforms surpassing an ill-defined point of

irreversibility.¹⁸⁸

Armed with this knowledge, we can better appreciate the dilemma in which Boris Yeltsin finds himself. He and his entourage are, in many ways, workers building a temple of democracy in a land with little clay for bricks. Their only recourse is to build the foundation and the walls as best they can, eschewing those who would raze it, and in the meantime hope that the Russian people and Western governments will come to their aid.

At times his position and policies may seem authoritarian to the West, but we cannot forget the context in which he is operating. We cannot forget that he has his own growing opposition. His reality is, "today people still support the reforms and the president, but if we go beyond a critical point we'll set off a general disaster."¹⁸⁹ And here it is important to acknowledge the elements of Russian nationalism, often associated with Vice President Alexander Rutskoi, as well as proponents for either a fascist or Stalinist system, who call for a return to a strong, highly centralized government. In a recent article in Foreign Affairs, Andrei Kozyrev, Russian Foreign Minister, discusses

¹⁸⁸Hosking, 157-162.

¹⁸⁹"Russia seeks deferral on debt interest," Associated Press-Moscow, as reported in The Monterey Herald (Monterey, CA: 31 May 1992).

the dangerous prospect of fascist ideology staging a comeback in some form. There also exists an audience only too eager to welcome would-be fuehrers with their promise of miraculously cheap vodka for all their grand vision of restoring Russia in its grandeur to the borders of the former USSR....Many of us recall the warning from American scholar, Richard Pipes, at the time of *perestroika* in the former USSR, that behind the facade of complete renovation old attitudes persist, as do the forces trying to bank on them. This warning has lost little of its urgency.¹⁹⁰

In yet another historic parallel, their criticisms sound remarkably similar to those of the past.¹⁹¹ Their truth is that,

Freedom is a wonderful and seductive thing, but we do not want freedom if, as has happened in Europe, it will only increase our age-old debt to the people....We have become convinced that so-called full economic freedom in reality means nothing but unrestrained license for the large economic forces and veritable slavery for the small forces....Political freedoms are incapable of changing the relationships between the existing forces within society.¹⁹²

Yeltsin's only resort is to turn to the democratic West and ask for assistance in further democratizing Russia -- taking her beyond the point of irreversibility. Pleading for economic and political support from Western democracies, he

¹⁹⁰Andrei Kozyrev, "Russia: A Chance for Survival," Foreign Affairs (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, Inc., 1992), 5.

¹⁹¹See earlier citation of A.V. Nikitenko, Moya Povest' O Samom Sebye (My Story of Myself), Volume II, St. Petersburg, 1905, p.78. As cited in Szamuely, 155.

¹⁹²Szamuely, 173-174.

said, "without such support 'a dictatorship will emerge.' Everything his government had achieved would be threatened by opponents on the extreme right....'I have faith in the reforms, which are irreversible. But should they fail, I can already feel the breath on our neck of those who wear the black and brown shirts.'"¹⁹³

Yeltsin may indeed leave office in 1996.¹⁹⁴ And, even if he names a successor favorable to democracy, our historical examination indicates that at some point a strongly conservative regime **will probably** return. Our ultimate challenge is to understand this process while continuing to interact with Russia. If we cannot establish a western-style democracy, we can at least prepare ourselves for the authoritarian possibility and realize that our political spectrum is far different than that of Russia.

Therefore, when we see a conservative backlash occurring, we cannot afford to pull back from our commitment to democracy. The key to understanding the changes underway in Russia is to examine them within that nation's culture and to participate, at every step, as both a partner and confidant in the democratic process. Even if we fail to establish a liberal democracy in Russia within the next few years, we must

¹⁹³Philip Jacobsen, The London Times (London, 7 February 1992), 12.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

not consider our task a lost cause. The greatest mistake would be to brand it as an enemy without justification. To think that the establishment of an authoritarian regime in Russia signals the return of our nemesis would be narrow and poorly informed.

The United States has been extremely successful in its relations with authoritarian regimes, Singapore and South Korea being the most noted examples.¹⁹⁵ Like those regimes, the Russians, too, recognize the value of a certain degree of centralized leadership during great social turmoil. We must, therefore, accept the fact that the ability to change the system is limited by her historical and political context.

Proceeding from that premise, the Russian truth today seems to be,

There is nothing surprising in the fact that a man like Chernyshevsky--with all his unshakable views on overriding importance of equality and social justice, the need to employ all means to achieve these aims, and irrelevancy of constitutional and libertarian principles--should have arrived fairly early at the necessity of a benevolent dictatorship.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵It is instructive to note that in both of these examples, the United States has interacted successfully with authoritarian governments. In South Korea, political and military means were the chief forms of interaction. In Singapore, economic and a considerable U.S. presence were the mechanisms used. Consequently, in both cases the U.S. was able to wield considerable influence.

¹⁹⁶Szamuely, 177.

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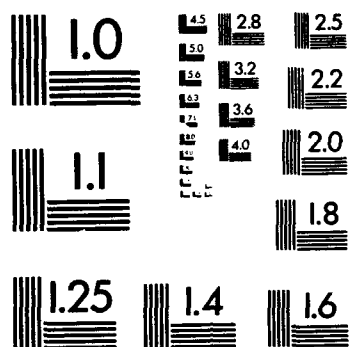
TWO STEPS FORWARD ONE STEP BACK: THE PATTERN OF RUSSIAN
LIBERAL REFORMS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR RUSSIA AND THE
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Additionally, Mikhailovsky, denounced in the Soviet Union of old, wrote words apropos for many Russians today:

Liberalism might be attractive to someone who is lucky enough to be free from material want. Freedom is a very pleasant thing. But liberalism interprets freedom in a very narrow, purely formal way. It sees freedom in abstract right, in paper permissions, in the absence of legal bans. But liberalism does not understand that legal liberty can be important only when the individual possesses the material means to make use of this liberty...All the constitutional minutiae have precious little meaning for the man who has been deprived of the physical means and the intellectual development needed to savour these political desserts.¹⁹⁷

Finally, the real implication of this thesis is not that the pattern of two steps forward and one step back **will** recur, only that it is **highly likely** to reassert itself. Unless there is a massive influx of political, economic, and cultural goods, beyond the current emergency aid programs, Russia may, indeed, return to authoritarianism. To preclude that possibility, prudence demands that we immediately welcome Russia into the fold in all aspects of international relations and strongly support Yeltsin with both economic and political action. Only then, can Russia go the way of Germany and Japan.

¹⁹⁷Szamuely, 173.

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8. Professor Mikhail Tsypkin Department of National Security Affairs (NS/Tk) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, California 93943	1
9. Professor David B. Winterford Department of National Security Affairs (NS/Wb) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, California 93943	1

10. Captain Robert W. Hand 1
799 Lyndon Street
Monterey, California 93940
11. Ambassador Robert Kennedy-Minott 1
Department of National Security Affairs (NS/Mi)
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, California 93943
12. Lieutenant Colonel Adolf H. Grimm 1
P.O. Box 906
Charlestown, Rhode Island 02813
13. Robert E. Hand 1
3013 Laurel Avenue
Lake Wales, Florida 33853